

HOW TO...

Create your own movie masterpieces

If you want to trim your home movies but feel a little daunted by most video-editing applications, Karl Wright and the free software on this month's DVD can help

CYBERLINK POWERDIRECTOR 5VE



All too often, home movies can drag on and include lots of random shots of the cameraman's feet. CyberLink's PowerDirector, the full version of which is on this month's cover DVD, is a versatile video-editing program designed to help novice users make their films slicker and more exciting to watch.

1 Before you start capturing and editing video, you must configure a few settings. From the Edit menu, click on Preferences. On the File tab, select the file format you want snapshots of your video to be taken in; we recommend JPG. On the General tab, select PAL as the TV format. This is the TV format used in the UK; if you choose NTSC, the video you capture won't play on some DVD and VHS players. Then close the Preferences dialog box.

2 We need to create a project. Go to File, Create Project then to Save Project. Save your project in the C:\My Works folder and give it a meaningful name. Next you must find the video you want to edit. If the files are on your hard disk, simply click the Load Media button. This is on the top left-hand side of the screen above the window that shows you the contents of your media library. Choose to import either a specific file or an entire folder to the library, then browse to the file or folder in question.

If the footage you want is still on your video camera, plug the camera into your PC or, if it's

an analogue camera, into a video-capture device that's connected to your PC. Click on the Capture button above the Load Media button. PowerDirector detects your camera automatically and video appears in the capture screen.

From within PowerDirector, fast-forward to the bit you want to capture and press the red Record button. When you reach the end of the clip you want to edit, press Stop. PowerDirector will prompt you to give your clip a name and then save it to the C:\My Works folder. Repeat the process until you have captured all the footage you want to edit.

3 Go to Edit, Aspect Ratio and choose either 16:9, if you want your finished video to be widescreen, or 4:3 if you want it to fit the screen of an old-fashioned TV. For this walkthrough, we used the software in timeline mode.

From your media library, drag the video clips you want on to the movie timeline, which is the one with the picture of the film next to it. On the left-hand margin of the library, click the fourth button from the top. This takes you to the software's Transition Room. Select a transition, drag it until your mouse cursor is over the point in the timeline where two clips meet and release the cursor. Repeat the process until there are suitable transitions between all film clips.

You can preview the result in the Preview screen, making sure you first click on the Movie button at the bottom. If you don't do this, the

software will show only one clip at a time and won't play transitions.

4 To add a soundtrack to your video, first import the necessary music files to your project workspace using the Load Media button. From the library, drag these music files on to the audio clip timeline.

To prevent the soundtrack competing with your movie's own audio, adjust the relative volume of each by dragging the audio level line (the thin line that runs through the centre of an audio clip) up or down. In this way, you can easily fade back and forth between your video's own audio and your music soundtrack.

5 One of our video clips is a bit dark. To fix it, we put the clip in the timeline, selected it and clicked the Magic Clean button to the left of the timelines (it looks like an eraser). From the drop-down menu, we chose the CyberLink EagleVision option and clicked Apply. This automatically optimised the clip's brightness and contrast levels.

6 Finally, you need to export your video so that others can watch it. To do this, click Produce. Select Create a File, choose the file format you wish to export to (most people will be able to view Windows' AVI format) and then click the green 'proceed' arrow. PowerDirector will now create your final movie file. **CS**

